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CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION		1 - 12	1
I.	PANEL DISCUSSION	13 - 46	3
	A. Panel I	13 - 33	3
	B. Panel II	34 - 46	9
II.	CLOSING STATEMEMTS	47 - 52	12

Annexes

I. Final Statement issued by the North American Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine on the occasion of the Ninth United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine 15

II. Workshop Reports 17

III. Message to the Symposium from H.E. Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization 27

IV. 1992-1993 North American Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine 32

V. List of participants and observers 34

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Ninth United Nations North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 24 to 26 June 1992, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/74 B of 11 December 1991. The theme of the Symposium was "Peace is the Fruit of Justice: Twenty-five Years of Occupation - Overcoming the Obstacles, Preparing the Way for Palestine".

2. A total of 87 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Canada and the United States of America, 21 of them as observers, participated in the work of the Symposium. Six panelists and 32 workshop facilitators and resource persons made presentations. The opening and closing meetings were chaired by H.E. Mr. Victor Camilleri (Malta), Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Symposium was moderated by Ms. Jeanne Butterfield, outgoing Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine.

3. In his opening statement, H.E. Mr. Victor Camilleri stressed that the year which had elapsed had been filled with events as important as unprecedented on the global level. Regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the ongoing peace process under the auspices of the United States of America and the Russian Federation, had raised some hopes, even if so far no concrete results had been achieved.

4. Despite this process, the conditions of the Palestinian people living under occupation had considerably deteriorated. The repressive measures practiced by Israel to maintain the occupation were in violation of its international obligations under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, as well as of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which Israel had ratified in 1991.

5. It was necessary to intensify efforts to ensure that the security of the Palestinian people under occupation was guaranteed. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People invited all those concerned, particularly the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention, to take all measures within their power to induce Israel to discharge its obligations under those instruments.

At the government level, diplomatic efforts and pressures should be applied. Non-governmental organizations also had a role to play at the grassroots level.

6. Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations, read out a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The message is reproduced in annex IV.

7. Ms. Jeanne Butterfield, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs (NACC) said that 1992 marked 25 years of occupation of the Palestinian territories and the tenth anniversary of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, an event which, at that time, had propelled many NGOs into action on the question of Palestine. Without government status, nor economic might, the NGOs had neither the power to make treaties, nor to set policy. Nevertheless, they were determined that the rights and lives of the Palestinian people not continue to be trampled on by an illegal and inhuman occupation.

8. Despite many accomplishments over the years, NGOs were suffering from some weaknesses which were hindering their ability to do their work, particularly due to factionalism. Until the Palestinian movement recognized the fact that its political and ideological differences were largely irrelevant to its supporters in the NGO movement, it would not benefit from their full talents and capacities. NGOs also continued to suffer from narrow organizational concerns and failed to initiate common efforts or to give significant enough support to the efforts that already existed. The NGO movement was weakened by the lack of a common strategy and programme and by the lack of resources currently experienced by most of its organizations.

9. She called on NGOs to come together with renewed energy and determination. The role of NGOs in public education could not be underestimated and needed to be continued. By various activities such as writing, organizing public events, producing films and ideas, working to inform the media, and especially by travelling to the region and bringing back eyewitness reports, NGOs allowed Palestinian voices to be heard.

10. Advocacy efforts directed at Governments and at members of the United Nations Security Council itself had to be increased as soon as possible, particularly with regard to protection. The implementation of international sanctions and other measures such as scientific and cultural boycotts, similar to those taken by the anti-apartheid movement, were a powerful way to encourage compliance with United Nations resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

11. NGOs supported the call made by the representative of Palestine for the immediate implementation of United Nations resolutions, for an emergency meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention and for direct information by the United Nations in the form of a United Nations ombudsman, United Nations observers and a United Nations peace-keeping force to provide direct protection to the Palestinian people.

12. Although the international NGO community had been intervening directly to protect, to guard and to defend the Palestinian people under occupation, it could learn lessons from other NGO movements around the world. The current NGO project of an international peace walk needed to be expanded so that volunteers came by the planeload to provide an international presence in each and every community in occupied Palestine and all the green line. She warned of the potential dangerous consequences for Palestinians of insufficient international action on their behalf.

I. PANEL DISCUSSION

A. Panel 1

"25 years of occupation: overcoming the obstacles"

13. Dr. Haider Abdel Shafi, head of the Palestinian negotiating delegation to the peace talks and Chairman of the Palestine Red Crescent in Gaza, said that the absence of peace in the Middle East was due to denying the Palestinian people its right to self-determination. Recent events had dictated the necessity of dealing seriously with the question of peace and the prospects of success on that road were dependent on the positions of the protagonists, the Palestinians and Israelis, in particular, the Arab States, the Europeans and Americans in general.

14. After reviewing the events which had taken place over the past half century and their implications for the condition of the Palestinian people, he said that the intifadah had been a spontaneous broad-based popular uprising by the Palestinians in the occupied territory to portray the tragedy of the Palestinian people, affirm their will to defend their right to self-determination, whatever the cost, and to express their categorical rejection of occupation. To the peace initiative, adopted by the Palestine National Council in 1988 and which called for acceptance of the two-State principle as a basis for

negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, Israel had replied by escalating its brutal practices. Despite the Israeli rejection, the Palestinian leadership had not hesitated to agree to participate in the regional peace conference under the auspices of the United States and the Russian Federation. In Madrid, the Palestinians had declared clearly and frankly the practical means for realizing a just and stable peace, and currently, they continued to be engaged in the peace process with open minds and hearts.

15. He went on to say that the basis of the peace process, as stipulated in the letter of invitation, were Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The letter of invitation also stated that the negotiations would be conducted in a Palestinian-Israeli track in two interrelated phases, the first plan aimed at establishing an interim Palestinian self-government that would endure for five years, with powers to be decided through negotiations; and the second plan scheduled to begin during the third year of the first phase with the objective of defining the final status of the occupied territories.

16. The arrangements in the interim period were transitional and would not be frozen into autonomy or self-government. All Israeli procedures that were in violation of international law, the Geneva Convention and United Nations resolutions had to be abolished and the citizens protected against repressive and oppressive measures. Laws that were discriminatory against local citizens had to be revoked. The power and authority of interim self-government should encompass the different aspects of a citizen's life and participation in internal security arrangements. The interim self-government should be established by elections through secret ballots, under the supervision of an international body.

17. The Israeli position, he said, was that the whole of Palestine was Israeli territory. Israel had consistently declared its desire for peace, claiming that it was the threatening and aggressive Arab-Palestinian position that foiled their attempt. If the conduct of the consecutive Zionist-Israeli leaderships were to be examined, it would be found that they had always been inclined to resort to force and violence rather than to reconciliation and peace. Israel continued to maintain its position at the negotiating table where it insisted on remaining the source of authority in the occupied territories, conceding limited administrative power to the Palestinian interim self-government but continuing the seizure of land and the establishment of more settlements.

18. The roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict stemmed from the attempt of the Arab countries to support and stand by the Palestinian people. The initial and basic Arab position was not absolute hostility towards Jewish aspirations in Palestine. Those initial attempts were to reconcile those aspirations and the basic rights of the Palestinian people in a peaceful and fair way. The Arab countries had never assumed an initial hostile position and they had sincere readiness for constructing normal relations on the basis of equity and justice. The current Arab position was seriously committed to a fair and just peace on the basis of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, the Golan Heights and south Lebanon against solid guarantees for Israel's security.

19. Regarding the position of the United States and Europe, Dr. Abdel Shafi said that they bore the responsibility for the crisis in the Middle East since they were maintaining a supportive and accommodating position towards Israel. Although they were most outspoken in proclaiming their support and respect for the principles of international law and human rights, their double standard attitude had made a mockery of those values and principles. However, there were some indications of positive change in the American and European positions.

20. He concluded by saying that the Palestinian and Israeli objectives would become compatible if the spirit of compromise and moderation prevailed. The Palestinians had already gone a long way in that direction by dropping the ideal of one democratic State in all of Palestine and accepting the two-State solution. The present moment was a moment of truth and crucial choice between what would lead to peace and equitable coexistence, or what would lead to protracted violence and bloodshed.

21. Mr. Raji Sourani, Director of the Gaza Center for Rights and Law, said that after 25 years of occupation, the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory not only had not improved, but had gotten "measurably worse". Violations, even grave breaches of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians Persons in Time of War were a daily occurrence. The occupation was consistently brutal and had been so since 1967. Although they were entitled to protection under the Convention, Palestinians were exposed to extra-judicial killing by Israeli undercover security personnel, excessive and disproportionate use of force by regular and irregular forces of Israel, expulsion outside the occupied territory, torture, denial of fair trial, detention, massive transfer of Israeli civilians into settlements built on confiscated Palestinian public land, demolitions of Palestinian homes, and other collective punishment such as curfews, restriction of movement, cutting of electricity and water supplies.

22. About half of the Gaza Strip and two thirds of the West Bank had been taken by Israel for settlements. The pace of settlement activity had increased since the beginning of the peace negotiations. Regarding the Israeli undercover units, he explained that they had operated in the West Bank and Gaza since the beginning of the intifada, but their role had been greatly expanded over the preceding year. The operational results from those units ranged from arrest without resorting to violence to deliberately inflicting injuries and wilful killing. He warned against the Israeli Government's offer of so-called "voluntary temporary expulsions", whereby the targeted person would be able to accept temporary expulsion in exchange for the permanent expulsion order being dropped. He warned that scores of Palestinian activists and political prisoners would be so expelled if there was no opposition from the international community and particularly the permanent members of the Security Council.

23. The Israeli Government, as the occupying power, was responsible for the rapidly deteriorating economic and human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Government was bound to respect the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and United Nations agreements and resolutions. It was time for the international community to live up to its obligations to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians under occupation. All NGOs had to make it a top priority to press their Governments in that direction.

24. Mrs. Michal Schwartz, writer and editor of Challenge magazine, said that the Israeli settlements drive in the territories occupied in 1967 had received fair coverage by the media, except for two settlement drives which were happening in the two most sensitive areas. The first plan called the Seven Stars Plan, in practice eradicated the Green Line through the building of Israeli settlements directly on either side of the Green Line. The second one was the Judaization of East Jerusalem.

25. The Seven Stars Plan was the largest such Judaization plan ever to be approved by the Israeli Government. It was presented as an emergency measure to absorb the anticipated waves of Jewish immigration from the Russian Federation. It envisaged the settling of 390,000 Jews in a narrow strip of land along the Green Line called the Triangle, which was the largest Arab population centre in Israel. The aim of the plan was not only to enhance Jewish population, but to curb Arab population growth. The end goal was to physically obliterate the presence of the Green Line and annul the option of partition between the Israeli State and a future Palestinian State. The plan was a mixture of two older Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization plans

which had not been implemented: the Hill Axis Plan and the Eron-Reichan Settlement Project. Although it was about to radically change the fate of the Arabs in Israel, it had been kept secret from the Arab heads of local councils and mayors. Now that it had been brought to the knowledge of the Arab public, it had become one of its main concerns and a central conflict with the Government.

26. The second settlement drive was taking place in the densely populated Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem, and was encircling one of the most sensitive sites for millions of Moslems: the Haram Ash-Sharif (The Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque). The aim was to empty the Old City of Arabs and transform it into a duplicate of the sterile-looking Jewish Quarter. It was planned to build public buildings and Jewish residential units in those areas surrounding the Old City which were so far untouched by Jewish settlers.

27. In both cases, the Jewish immigration was used as a political pawn to create facts that would obstruct any peaceful solution to the conflict. It was clear that if the Green Line disappeared, a solution based on United Nations resolutions, i.e., partition, would become impossible and the area would undergo a process of de facto annexation. Even more sensitive was the question of Jerusalem. Without agreement on this issue, a peace between Israel and the Palestinian people was impossible. The settlement drives emptied the peace talks of their meaning.

28. Mr. Richard Curtiss, a retired United States Foreign Service Officer and editor of the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, said that the United States policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, had evolved, over and over again, as a product of bitterly contending factions within the White House, the State Department, the Congress, or all three; with few exceptions, short-term domestic political considerations had generally prevailed over long-term national interests. Over the past half century, the long-range United States national interest had called for the pursuit of two strategic goals: to maintain a stable political environment in the Persian Gulf area, which contained 65 per cent of the world's petroleum resources, and to prevent any single regional or outside power from dominating. At the same time, largely for domestic political purposes, the United States had listed the "security of Israel" as a third regional goal. He expressed the view that currently there was no dispute between the United States and any Islamic State that did not derive directly or indirectly from the latter goal.

29. He pointed out that initially, American policy had tilted in the other direction. In 1919, the King-Crane team sent by President Wilson to the Middle East to see how the people of

Palestine wanted to be governed, had reported back that the Zionist plan for Palestine would be unfair to the Arabs, who at the time made up 90 per cent of the population of Palestine. In early 1965, President Roosevelt had reaffirmed that the United States would consult with the Arabs, as well as the Jews before taking any action related to Palestine. Although President Truman's memoirs and statements published after his presidency had taken pride in his role in the creation of Israel, his earlier statements had shown exasperation with the conflicting Middle East pressures to which he had been subjected from the day he had taken the oath of office. After the war of 1948, President Truman had repeatedly urged Israel to return to the partition lines; however, he never carried out a threat made at the time to revise the United States attitude towards Israel if it continued to ignore United Nations resolutions.

30. He said that in 1957, after Israel had refused to withdraw its forces from the Sinai, President Eisenhower had done what no United States President had done before, i.e., he had informed Israel that the United States would support a United Nations resolution calling for a suspension of assistance to Israel, and make efforts to halt assistance also from private Americans. Shortly thereafter, Israel had announced its readiness for a full and complete withdrawal from Sinai.

31. He said that the Six-Day War in June 1967 had changed forever the nature of the Israeli-Arab dispute and had also suggested a solution. The focus had shifted from Israeli survival among hostile neighbours to Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land in return for peace. United Nations Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of November 1967 had formalized the terms "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in recent conflict" in return for "acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force".

32. After reviewing the policies of successive American Administrations, he expressed the view that the current Administration had again demonstrated that Israel was sensitive to American pressure. However, President Bush was paying a steep domestic political price. His re-election campaign was beset with an almost unprecedented level of media hostility, harking back to the kind of treatment Presidents Ford and Carter had encountered after demonstrating a readiness to pressure Israel.

33. All of the theories on Middle East peace were being tested this year. If Israel's supporters were unable to stop the re-election of George Bush in the fall, there seemed little doubt

that he would bring about an Israeli-Palestinian peace based on United Nations Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and the "land for peace" formula. He concluded by saying that the fact that polls had indicated that President Bush would receive the votes of fewer than 10 per cent of American Jews who supported Israel would perhaps help those Americans who supported peace, justice and a two-State solution in the Holy Land, to decide what course to follow in the November 1992 election.

B. Panel 2

"Preparing the Way for Palestine"

34. Mr. Elia Zureik, Professor of Sociology, Queens College, Kingston, Ontario, said that while major political restructuring was happening in Europe, there was no sign that the echoes of the calls for democracy and self-determination would make their impact felt in the Middle East. It had finally been recognized by all concerned that the Palestine conflict was essentially a conflict between the indigenous Palestinian population and the Jewish community. The Palestinians had been barred from exercising the fundamental right of statehood at a time when globally nationalism and the nation-state had been undergoing a revival reminiscent of the nineteenth century, the birth period of the modern nation-state.

35. Any mention of hardships faced by Palestinians had to begin by noting the violation of the basic human right to mastery over one's political destiny. Wherever the Palestinians resided, they faced an insecure and ambiguous future. Palestinian history could be chronicled and catalogued in terms of a series of calamities. As a result of the Persian Gulf crisis, the Palestinians found themselves at the lowest ebb in their crisis-ridden history since the dispersal from their homeland in 1948. They were scattered in at least 15 neighbouring States, not to mention Europe and North and Latin America. There were around six million Palestinians worldwide, with slightly less than half residing in historical Palestine.

36. Palestinians had entered the peace negotiations under parameters defined in Israel's favour and in such a way as to exclude from the agenda any meaningful discussion of self-determination and statehood and to eliminate from participation key segments of the Palestinian community residing outside historical Palestine and those in East Jerusalem. Mindful of the hardships facing their dispersed communities, the Palestinians

had entered the negotiations knowing full well that what was proposed was falling substantially short of rectifying historical injustices done to their people.

37. Citing the hardships faced by Palestinians in their major areas of concentration, he explained that in Lebanon, a significant deterioration in health standards, education, employment, homelessness and general security conditions had taken place. There had also been a noticeable decline in the extent of services provided by UNRWA to the Palestinians in the camps, caused in large measure by budgetary deficits. In Kuwait, in addition to the economic loss and uprooting sustained by the Palestinian community, the destruction of social institutions catering to the Palestinians and the social disorganization resulting therefrom, there had been a high price paid in the area of human rights violations. The two communities that had traditionally depended on remittances from Palestinians in Kuwait were those living in Jordan and in the occupied territories. The most devastating effect of the Gulf war had befallen the West Bank and Gaza.

38. The economic dimension was but one part of the cluster of hardships faced by the Palestinians of the occupied territories in their twenty-fifth year under Israeli occupation. Human rights violations were legion. Israel's handling of the intifadah had shifted to the use of more brutal undercover methods which relied on extrajudicial killings, torture, imprisonment and expulsion of targeted Palestinian activists. Between 60 and 70 per cent of the land in the occupied territories had been seized by the Israeli authorities and put off limits as far as the Palestinians were concerned. The same was true for water resources which had been seized by the Israeli Government to the detriment of Palestinian agriculture and indeed of Palestinians' basic water needs.

39. In the area of human rights violations, ceaseless pressure had to be brought to stop Israeli death squads operating freely in the occupied territories. The recent publicity surrounding the existence of those squads was beginning to pay off, and human rights workers had begun to notice a drastic decline in the killings, beginning with the month of May of 1992. To be truthful to the principles of human rights, summary executions of Palestinian collaborators had also to be condemned. Palestinians in the occupied territories and outside it had launched a concerted campaign to curb those killings.

40. He said that in terms of nation-building, thework of NGOs was extremely important. Small-scale efforts to create autonomous, self-help institutions had to be encouraged. The detachment of the territories from the shackles of economic

dependence on Israel had to be sustained. The experiments in democratization, which had been accomplished in the early phase of the intifadah had all but evaportaed in the face of outside interference, ruthless tactics by the Israelis and endemic internal factionalism. Unless the Palestinians put their house in order, they would remain vulnerable to endless pressure. The upshot of that would be another lost opportunity in a costly struggle by the Palestinians on the road to statehood and independence.

41. Dr. Ruchama Marton, a physician and psychiatrist and Chairperson of the Association of Israeli and Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights, said that when one nation occupied another by force, violations must result. While the right to proper medical treatment was among the most basic of human rights, in the case of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, severe violations of medical rights were commonplace. Moreover, denial of these rights was commonly used by Israel for control and blackmail, and as a means of terrorizing the Palestinian population and punishing it collectively as well as individually.

42. Violations of medical rights in the occupied territories occurred at two levels: at the level of the overall population, or parts thereof, as well as individually. In both cases, such violations were a matter of daily routine, and complaints were recorded in her organization at a rate of about five per day. Her organization dealt with those complaints with varying degrees of success, through negotiations with the authorities, appeals to the court system and through direct medical and financial intervention. Throughout the years, especially since the beginning of the intifadah, there had been an attempt by the authorities to monitor and control very closely the development of medical services in the occupied territories. Apart from imposing different means of surveillance on doctors, hospitals and clinics, the Israeli Government had been very reluctant to invest money in improving the level of services. Moreover, it had taken measures to prevent private medical enterprises from developing, and had been blocking funds from external sources, even when these funds were specifically earmarked for medical purposes.

43. Another way to keep the level of medical services low was through limiting educational opportunities for Palestinian medical staff in Israel and abroad. In addition, residency programmes in Palestinian hospitals and the participation of Palestinian physicians in such programmes elsewhere had been curbed significantly, resulting in severe shortage of specialists in just about every area of medicine. In the Golan Heights, no Palestinian physician had been allowed to go through a residency

programme, and as a consequence the number of qualified specialsts was very low. There were only two neurosurgeons and one neurologist throughout the territories, all residing in the Jerusalem area. No such specialist was to be found in the Gaza Strip. Regarding cancer treatment, there was not a single fully-qualified oncologist throughout the territories. As far as radiotherapy was concerned, there was no medical centre throughout the territories which provided radiotherapy services. The shortage of qualified staff and equipment had resulted in a growing need for treatment in Israel by Palestinian patients. But since the beginning of the intifadah, the number of such patients had decreased significantly owing to an explicit government decision to limit such hospitalizations. Many medical teams operating in the territories were limited in their ability to move and communicate freely.

44. She said that other violations of medical rights took place at three levels: first, the Israeli authorities were often directly involved in causing physical harm to Palestinians; torture existed in the occupied territories on an alarming scale. Secondly, patients seeking medical treatment abroad were allowed to leave only if they made a written commitment not to return for three years. Lastly, medical conditions in the prison system violated medical rights.

45. Although the obligation of every physician was to act in order to reduce human suffering and to maintain the dignity and well-being of all humans, most Israeli physicians who had taken the physicians' oath collaborated with the occupation through their professional involvement. Her organization had decided to change that situation, and was seeking help through NGOs in order to raise international consciousness.

46. At the conclusion of its work, the participants in the North American Symposium heard reports from the workshops and requested the NACC to issue a final statement (see annex I). They also elected a new coordinating committee for the North American region for the years 1992-1993 (see annex III).

II. CLOSING STATEMENTS

47. Ms. Jeanne Butterfield, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine said that the Symposium had been very fruitful, as demonstrated by the reports of the 12 workshops. She expressed the hope that the recommendations contained in those reports would contribute to successful action by the NGO community.

48. Reverend Ibrahim Ayad, Chairman of the Palestine Committee for NGOs said that the Symposium was convened while the Palestinian people were facing very difficult circumstances in the occupied territories. Notwithstanding the unfair conditions imposed by Israel, the Palestinian people had agreed to participate in the peace process sponsored by the United States of America and the Russian Federation. But until now, no concrete result had been achieved. After 25 years of brutal occupation, instead of easing the unbearable situation of the population, Israel was intensifying the oppression and repression. Despite the inhuman practices against the Palestinian people, the international community was amost silent and some of the mass media tried to find justification in so-called security reasons.

49. The Palestinian people in their national pride would not accept slavery and humiliation and would not despair nor surrender. The intifadah would continue and increase. In that struggle, NGOs which represented the conscience of their nations, had an historical and vital role to accomplish, namely, to lead their rulers in the right path of justice and to promote the conditions in which the Palestinian people could live free, independent and sovereign. NGOs were asked to mobilize public opinion in their respective countries and to urge their Governments to work for an end of the settlements policy and of Jewish migration, the withdrawal of Israeli troops and their replacement with other forces under United Nations supervision.

50. Mr. Victor Camilleri (Malta), Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the Symposium was of particular importance, given the fact that it coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and the tenth anniversary of the invasion of Lebanon.

A great number of NGOs dated their activism on the question of Palestine to those days and the subsequent efforts by the United Nations to mobilize a worldwide constituency in support of the attainment of Palestinian rights and of peace with justice in the region.

51. Many initial objectives of that effort had been achieved and the different aspects of the Palestine question were much more widely known. Although a consensus had been generated on the basic elements of a solution of the question, much more needed to be done. As long as the occupation continued and Palestinian rights remained unimplemented, the problem could not be solved and the suffering and violations of human rights would continue.

It was therefore of the greatest importance to intensify the cooperation between the intergovernmental community and the NGOs.

52. The recommendations made by the various workshops were constructive and would no doubt contribute to improve the effectiveness of NGO action. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People would continue to intensify its efforts to bring about full respect for the fundamental inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and would do whatever it could to promote international action to ensure respect by Israel, as the occupying Power, of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the various human rights instruments. The Committee was confident that it could count on the support of the North American NGO community in carrying out its mandate.

Annex I

FINAL STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE NORTH AMERICAN CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NGOs ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE ON THE OCCASION OF THE NINTH UNITED NATIONS NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

1. The North American Coordinating Committee (NACC) was mandated to issue a statement of principle and purpose on behalf of the 1992 Ninth Regional North American Symposium on the Question of Palestine. The following is the NACC's statement:

2. While welcoming any serious international efforts towards a just and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab, Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, the NACC reaffirms as essential to such a process, the guiding substantive and procedural principles endorsed by the General Assembly in its calls for the United Nations-sponsored International Peace Conference on the Middle East expressed in resolutions 38/58C, 43/176 and 46/75. Those principles include (1) the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, (2) the consequent right of the Palestinian people to be represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization, which they have determined to be their sole legitimate representative, (3) the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, (4) the consequent illegality of the annexations of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and (5) the consequent illegality of Israeli settlements and expropriations of land in territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, (6) the right of Palestinian refugees to return,
(7) the right to equal status of the various parties to a negotiating process, including the PLO, Israel and the concerned Arab States, and (8) the special obligations of the United Nations in promoting peace negotiations in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other instruments of international law and international covenants on human rights.

3. In view of Israel's continuing, systematic and massive violations of the most fundamental rights of Palestinians guaranteed by the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we call upon the Security Council to implement its resolution 681 (1990) of December 1990, to ensure a speedy withdrawal of Israeli administrative and security forces from the occupied Palestinian territories and to establish there, an interim international presence pending a successful outcome of a

in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, protection under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We urge the Security Council to fulfil the special obligations of the United Nations to the Palestinian people by insuring a significant role for the United Nations and its relevant agencies in the present bilateral and multilateral peace talks. We urge that those sponsoring, hosting and/or participating in those talks insist upon adhering to the substantive and procedural principles enunciated above and previously endorsed by the General Assembly and by signatories to the relevant covenants of international law, including covenants on human rights.

4. The NACC remains convinced of the important role NGOs have in mobilizing public support for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in promoting the national and individual rights of Palestinians in the region, and in contributing to a process of democratization, demilitarization and of economic and social development envisioned for all peoples in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international covenants on human rights. The NACC reiterates its conviction that a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the key to achieving these goals in the Middle East. The mandate of the NACC is to help to promote that peace, the rights and humane values necessary to and inherent within its achievement, by raising public awareness, mobilizing public opinion for it, strengthening and expanding the networks of NGOs committed to it in North America and overseas, and helping to coordinate efforts of North American NGOs to make that peace a reality.

Annex II

WORKSHOP REPORTS

Workshop I: Defending Human Rights: Children, Prisoners, Expellees

The workshop on defending human rights discussed:

(a) The killing of Palestinians by Israeli undercover units and the follow-up activities to the report issued by the Palestine Human Rights Information Center report on this human rights issue;

(b) The human rights situation of Palestinians inside "The Green Line", and in particular land expropriations and their implications for Palestinians;

(c) The situation of Palestinians in Kuwait and the human rights abuses they continue to endure; and

(d) The effectiveness of our work in reducing armed attacks on Palestinian children by the Israeli military, and the need to focus on continuing attacks on Palestinian schools and the Palestinian educational system.

The workshop recommends that:

Our work as NGOs should broaden its scope to include human rights issues as they pertain to Palestinians living inside "The Green Line" (Israel). In order to do this, we need to build and strengthen our links with Palestinian organizations and researchers, inside the Green Line, and appropriate Israeli organizations and researchers. A list of such organizations and persons should be published in an upcoming NACC newsletter - "Connections".

We must continue to push the United States Government to tie its foreign aid to human rights. In the case of Israel, aid should not be given while a pattern of gross human rights violations exists. We must also assert that Israeli housing projects and settlement activities, whether in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, or inside the Green Line, are racist in character as long as they exclude non-Jews and therefore, should not receive any financial or other support, including loan guarantees for the settlement of Jewish immigrants.

NGOs should engage in issue-focused, coordinated activities, using resources and documentation available within our network or otherwise available to our network. The NACC Fax Tree provides a good mechanism for such communication and coordinated activity. It should be used, expanded, and supported. The NACC can also produce sample letters to elected representatives for use in this issue-focused work.

Workshop II: Ending United States Aid for Occupation

This workshop focused on existing campaigns against United States aid to occupation and on the likelihood that Israel's request for $10 billion in loan guarantees would be reintroduced in the wake of the recent Israeli elections. Resource persons Curtiss and Butterfield made concrete suggestions of ways all NGOs can influence public opinion. Dick Curtiss described the support the Washington Report had given individuals and groups wanting to place ads against the loan guarantees in the regional and national press. Jeanne Butterfield talked about PSC's "Don't Pay for Occupation," campaign, which has available organizer's packets and an ad which groups can use in their own communities. She stressed the need not to give up the linkage between aid and occupation practices, saying that an anti aid campaign should not simply be tailored to American taxpayers' self-interests and economic hard times.

Other participants described how this period of economic decline had made people more receptive to the "no aid" message citing successful work with the trade union movement. Overall, the sentiment was that we had to work simultaneously on three fronts: (1) need to keep up efforts to educate the public about aid and occupation; (2) need to bridge the gap between evolving opinion and congressional action; (3) need to undertake more research to get a true picture of the magnitude of United States support for Israel, public and private.

There was a sense of urgency in the discussion about how to influence Congress, and how to maximize our collective pressure - are we as NGOs prepared to act in a coordinated fashion? Can we find ways to share information about what is being done in localities and how members of Congress have responded to visiting delegations? Can the NACC play an effective role in coordinating a campaign against the loan guarantees and ongoing United States aid?

Most of the group expressed a willingness to undertake the planning of a tour of Israel peace activists, who could bring the "stop aid" message directly to members of Congress in their home districts, to Jewish organizations and the general public. It was also stressed that we must use all conventional and innovative methods to get our views across to incumbents and challengers before elections in November and that we must be prepared to take immediate action if the loan guarantees are reintroduced.

Workshop III: Land, Water, Settlements

The workshop focused on the settlements issue. The following were some of the suggestions:

(1) That no legitimacy should be given to Mr. Rabin's logic of differentiating between settlements. He considers some to be security settlements and others strategic and still others political.

This differentiation represents merely a rhetorical gimmick for the Palestinians, while it helps Mr. Rabin to pretend he had stopped settlement activities. The United States Administration would then be in a position to provide the loan guarantees to Israel with the latter not having stopped the settlements.

(2) That the expansion of the municipality of Jerusalem into the West Bank is not legitimate. Whether this expansion is formally recognized by Israeli law or is de facto is irrelevant; the damage is the same.

(3) That Palestinian and Israeli NGOs provide their North American counterparts with information to be used in a North American campaign, the theme of which could be "Jerusalem: A City Divided by Occupation." This would counter the "Jerusalem United" campaign promoted on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1967 war.

(4) In the context of the United States elections, local communities in the United States should be exposed to the issue of foreign aid to Israel (the $3.4 billion yearly as well as the $1 billion loan guarantees). Inconsistencies with today's growing needs of the American society must be pointed out.

(5) Public education on the issue of the United Nations resolutions concerning Palestinian rights be promoted, even by advertising the resolutions in major North American newspaper.

(6) That the idea of withdrawal of Jewish Israel settlers be promoted especially in the mainstream media.

Workshop IV: Misinformation and Disinformation

The two speakers gave numerous accounts and detailed examples of United States media bias against Palestinians and Arabs in general. Some examples given were subtle and took a studied eye to discern, while other examples evidenced blatant racism. The participants unanimously agreed that NGOs must give greater attention to interacting with the United States media.

CONCRETE ACTIONS FOR NGOs

1. Utilize the current NACC Fax Tree to respond en masse to biased reporting. The NACC could fax NGOs a copy of the biased article along with five or so points NGOs should include in their letters to the media, or the NACC could send through the Fax Tree a sample letter.

2. Invite a representative from Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) and other media activist organizations to submit an article to the NACC newsletter, "Connections", advocating the importance for NGOs to interact with the media.

3. The NACC could write a press release to mainstream and alternative media about the Symposium (its purpose, results, etc.) to publicize our actions.

4. NGOs should interact more with the activist media monitoring group, FAIR, for assistance in monitoring and interacting with the media.

Workshop V: Supporting Palestinian Institution Building

Leila Diab introduced the workshop's objectives after which the participants introduced themselves and their organizations and stated what they hoped to accomplish at the session.

Both Vivien Stromberg and Robin Morgan emphasized the need for North American NGOs:

- To work in partnership with Palestinian women's institutions;
- To respect the goals, objectives and priorities set by Palestinian women's organizations;
- To support Palestinan women's programmes;
- To educate the North American public on the reality and struggles of Palestinian women and confront stereotyping Arab women;
- To bring about commonalities among women in areas of human rights, violence against women.

Rawia Bishara stressed the need to identify priorities of Palestinian women under occupation such as economic cooperatives, child care centres, while Najat Khelil drew attention to the fact that women's institutions and their objectives change according to the political context in which they work.

Ms. Khelil called on NGOs to support women's self-reliance projects that attempt to disengage from the Israeli occupation, such as frozen vegetable factories, health-care services, training agricultural workers and providing support for women's vocational training centres.

Rabib Hadi urged NGOs to support Palestinian community survival while aiding long-term projects by helping in family sponsorship programmes, as well as publicizinig cases of Palestinian women prisoners and supporting cultural workers; and to pay special attention to women's health by providing medical equipment such as mammography machines to hospitals in occupied territories.

Action proposals (consensus):

1. Publishing a resource directory that includes all Palestinian women's groups in occupied Palestine with a synopsis of their work, their addresses, phone and fax numbers; contact persons, as well as their needs.

2. Publishing a resource directory that includes North American organizations that work in support of Palestinian women.

3. Organizing specialized fact-finding North American delegations to visit occupied territories and determine needs of Palestinian women, including options of sending professional volunteers, i.e., health care, art, agriculture.

4. Donating books, magazine subscriptions and other relevant literature to women's study centres in occupied Palestine.

5. Increasing media outreach highlighting Palestinian women's reality and concerns.

6. Calling on all United Nations agencies to provide protection for Palestinian community's survival in the occupied territories.

7. Utilizing NACC Fax Tree to alert NGOs about urgent cases of women being tortured.

Workshop VI: Supporting Israeli Peace Projects

After the core discussion the following ideas were suggested:

1. Use of the NACC Fax Tree to publicize human rights work by Israeli peace groups.

2. A video made by NGOs (including Israeli and Palestinian NGOs) to be shown across North America as an educational vehicle about the problems of occupation, particularly medical and human rights issues.

3. Publicity for Challenge magazine should be put in NGO newsletters and other publications.

4. Medical training in the United States for Palestinian physicians and health workers should be encouraged.

Workshop VII: Gulf War Aftermath: Needs of Palestinians in Hardship Areas

Neil Hicks of the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights described the situation of Palestinians in Kuwait. Declining from 400,000 in 1990 to 200,000 after the Gulf war to 40,000 now. The remaining Palestinians are those mostly with Egyptian travel documents or secure positions. The former have nowhere to go and collectively pose no threat to the Kuwaiti Government. Yet they continue to be targets of subtle harassment and to be threatened. Those who left for Jordan are in difficult circumstances.

Dr. Louise Cainkar reported on the number of Palestinians in countries outside Palestine. The expansion of the community in the United States since the Gulf war has made it the wealthiest and among the largest, offering this community the challenge of playing a larger role and responsibility in these matters. In Jordan 80 per cent of refugees from Kuwait are unemployed, with one third living below the poverty line, while little information is published on the largest group - those in Lebanon.

Frustrated by a seeming lack of attention to the plight of Palestinians in hardship areas (outside of Palestine), possibly resulting from a tendency of NGOs to react to the agenda set by the media, it was felt that awareness needs to be increased among the NGOs. The NACC will be provided with the details of the situation of Palestinians in Kuwait and appropriate responses for NGOs by the Lawyers' Committee. Transmitting this through the Fax Tree may initiate a response which will fuel NGO and other interest in the diaspora of the Palestinians.

Workshop VIII: Implementing United Nations Resolutions

The workshop focused on the history of United Nations efforts to implement United Nations resolutions on Namibia (especially Security Council resolutions 432 (1978), 385 (1976), and 435 (1978) and on the International Court of Justice opinion of 1971 on Namibia. Lessons from the Namibia experience were then compared and contrasted to the history of United Nations action on Palestine. The resource people spoke about several problems of implementation of the resolutions on Namibia, especially problems of interpretation, of delaying the timetable and of training. Lessons instructive for NGO practice included the importance of pressuring monitoring bodies to establish public records, establising good relations locally, setting up private monitoring to observe and comment, and understanding expectations and limitations on the official monitoring body.

On the question of Palestine, the resource person emphasized the differences between the Namibia situation and that of Palestine, including the fact that in one case the mandate power stayed and in the other case it left, and that the ICJ opinion on Namibia was very important while there has never been an ICJ opinion on Palestine. It was suggested that, in part, implementation of United Nations resolutions depends on public understanding of the fact of Israeli aggression in obtaining the territory it holds. Further, in addition to United Nations resolutions, the States Members of the United Nations have an obligation to ensure compliance with the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The United Nations Security Council can invoke Chapter VII of the Charter and take interim measures such as sanctions to ensure compliance, and to provide protection until such time as the occupation ends.

The workshop participants agreed to increase NGO efforts towards the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions (especially Security Council resolution 681 (1990) regarding protection) and of the protection ensured by the Fourth Geneva Convention by undertaking the following action:

1. To increase the level of awareness among the NGO constituency about the content of relevant United Nations resolutions and of the Fourth Geneva Convention (in the form of a popularized pamphlet on these issues) and to direct NGO constituent action in two directions:

(a) Constituency-based efforts directed at the United States Congress calling for implementation of protection and of the suspension of United States aid to Israel in the light of its violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention;

b) Constituency efforts directed at the appropriate United Nations Member States and bodies to press for full implementation of Security Council resolution 681 (1990) on protection.

2. To increase its work to educate the media on these issues.

Workshop IX: Lobbying and Letter-writing

Mr. Burgan gave a very effective and inspirational presentation generating many questions and much interest. Attendees received an "insider's" perspective which, as Mr. Burgan noted, is crucial to our work as NGOs.

Mr. Burgan stressed the importance of developing relationships with our representatives in congress and with our community -- gaining influence in civic affairs will provide us with much greater influence on the issue of Palestine.

We learned that in approaching our representatives, we must represent ourselves as allies and supporters of our representatives.

There are a few ways to make our voices heard effectively.

Letter-writing: Mr. Burgan outlined the important points concerning letters.

1. A return address must reflect the congressperson's respective zip code.

2. Letters must be succinct, typewritten.

3. A letter should not be combative; rather it should be friendly and not overly demanding.

4. Letters should include bill number and sponsor.

5. Include some background information as to why you support/oppose the bill. Offer, or attach more background information such as settlement activity, why loan guarantees have an impact on our economy, etc.)

When you receive a response, you may act as follows:

1. If letter is "non-commital", write back, include the congressperson's response, and note that you would like a stronger response, such as an indication of how your representative may act on this issue.

2. You may follow up with a telephone call.

Numerous calls and letters should lead towards developing a relationship with a congressperson's staffer. Mention the staffer in your communications and send them duplicates of your letters being sure to express your gratitude.

Letters alone will not change a congressperson's mind. You must be able to deliver votes, offer money, and become active in generating venues where your representative can appear locally.

Get to know your representative and his/her staffers. As a member of the local Democratic/Republican Party, you can attend events, offering you a rare opportunity to speak personally with your representative staff. As a local community activist, your congressperson will increasingly take seriously your ability to deliver votes. Invite your representative to your home to meet with local activists who can raise funds. This is the level at which we can begin to have serious influence.

After working for Congressman Dymally for eight years, Mr. Burgan believes that all our work is limited if we do not direct some of our energy at congressional affairs. We need to keep abreast of current bills, be aware of what members of Congress hold key committee positions and continually inject the issue of Palestine in the significant corridors of power.

Workshop X: Skills Workshop: Media

The resource persons presented a host of ideas, strategies and tactics for interaction with the media by grassroots groups in general. The presentation amounted to a primer on media activism. Also presented were 10 myths of media bias found on the Middle East, to which the presenter alerted the members.

Concrete actions for NGOs:

1. NGOs in consultation with FAIR, draw up a list of 10 myths presented by the media, and pass them out to members as a flyer, so that members can be alerted to these biases.

2. A FAIR representative submit an article to NACC newsletter, "Connexions", advocating and explaining grass-roots media activism.

Workshop XI: Fund-raising

The fund-raising workshop outlined principles of fund-raising and identified sources of funding for non-profits. It

stressed the need to create diverse sources of funding so that organizations are not dependent on any one source of funding. It gave practical training on ways to solicit funds from individuals as a primary funding base, as well as from foundations.

Workshop XII: Educating the Public

This workshop convened by Larry Ekin of ADC, included a great deal of participation and dialogue. The discussion began by identifying the need to make connections on educational resources. The question was posed asking how to approach groups who are receiving their first exposure to the Middle East.

It was proposed that a variety of approaches and strategies might be helpful. Keeping the theme simple aids those making a first approach to the issues. At a basic level, a fundamental concern is the sterotyping of Palestinians, which can be addressed through human contact. The human interaction between Arab-Americans/Canadians and others at educational forums, displays of children's art, handiwork, and having children tell their story provide an excellent opening with a human face.

There was discussion of group and individual travel as an educational resource. In addition to shattering sterotypes, the effect can be to mobilize and energize individuals who have contacts in a variety of constituencies.

The workshop proposed that the importance of alternative travel be highlighted and that a list of NGOs sending delegations and a brochure for travel agencies be prepared. One NGO will undertake this, seeking NACC compiled information in what NGOs are doing to educate and recommending that such a list be distributed to all NGOs. If the participants agreed, this kind of participatory "working" workshop is more conducive to becoming action oriented. Additional benefits include interaction of NGOs, helping NGOs to identify one another and particularly those with common interest and initiatives. We hope that more time will be given to this kind of workshop in the future.

Annex III

MESSAGE TO THE SYMPOSIUM FROM H.E. MR. YASSER ARAFAT, CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

Your Excellency, the Chairman of the delegation of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the Ninth United Nations North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine,

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the non-governmental organizations of North America,

Friends and distinguished guests,

On the occasion of the Ninth United Nations North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, it gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Palestinian people and of my colleagues the members of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and on my own personal behalf, to convey to you and to all those participating in the Symposium the warmest greetings and best wishes and to wish you continued success in the magnanimous tasks of implementing the resolutions of the United Nations and giving effect to the will of the international community so as to enable our Palestinian people to regain and exercise its inalienable national rights.

I should like on this occasion to express to you and, through you, to the members of the distinguished Committee, our high appreciation for the sustained efforts the Committee makes in defending the rights of our people, in presenting its just cause and in mobilizing support for its righteous struggle to end the Israeli occupation of its land and its Holy Places so as to regain the exercise of its national rights, chief among them the right to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish its own independent State with its capital at Jerusalem.

I also take this important occasion to convey our salutations and our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Boutrós Boutrós-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his worthy and constructive efforts in support of our people's just cause and its imprescriptible national rights and for his constant endeavour to secure the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy and

of the United Nations relating to the question of Palestine and the establishment of security and peace to the Middle East and Mediterranean region as an indispensable condition for the achievement of security and peace in the world as a whole.

The Symposium is being held on the theme "Peace is the fruit of justice: 25 years of occupation - overcoming obstacles, preparing the way for Palestine". For our people these are most important and vital matters at a time when, because of the continued Israeli occupation, our occupied Palestinian territory is experiencing a grave deterioration in the human rights situation owing to the ongoing Israeli violations and practices in this domain the tempo of which has been stepped up in recent days to extend to all aspects of the life of the Palestinian people under Israeli military occupation. Such practices are in grave violation of the principles that govern human rights and fundamental freedoms and are pursued in a constantly methodical manner such as gives expression to a fixed, organized and systematic Israeli policy, implemented by successive Israeli Governments, against our people throughout the 25-year life of the occupation of our territory. As part of this methodical process, the Israeli occupation authorities have been maintaining a total military blockade of the occupied Gaza Strip and other parts of our occupied territory since 25 May 1992, an action that threatens to bring about the fearful catastrophe of famine. This constitutes collective punishment of our people, and it is also a grave and flagrant violation of the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention.

The Israeli practices and violations in question include savage acts carried out by the occupation authorities and armed settlers, such as the shooting to death of Palestinian citizens, the demolition of homes, the destruction of private property, the burning of household furnishings, the uprooting of fruit trees, random and arbitrary arrests, and the closing of entire areas, their designation as military zones and the imposition there of curfews, thereby exposing Palestinian citizens to danger and to death given the serious shortage of foodstuffs and medical supplies in particular. It is, in truth, a war of mass extermination that is being waged against our people inside our occupied territory.

In all of the occupied Palestinian territory, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian people continues to be subjected to a frantic escalation in the acts and crimes committed by the Israeli army and armed settlers and particularly by the Israeli execution squads, formed by a decision emanating from the apex of the Israeli military-political establishment, which range through Palestinian towns, villages and camps spreading and sowing murder, terror and intimidation among our people. This prompted the Secretary-General of the United Nations

and the President of the Security Council to address to the Government of Israel numerous appeals to desist from acts of violence and from violating the human rights of Palestinian citizens. These appeals have been accorded no discernable notice by the Israeli occupation authorities.

Other international bodies have adopted on numerous occasions a variety of communiqués and reports expressing condemnation of Israel's refusal to abide by and fulfill its commitments, its persistent violation of the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention and the principles of international law in the occupied territories, and its insistence on not acknowledging the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to the Palestinian people in the territories it occupies despite the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights which have reaffirmed the applicability of the Convention to the territories occupied since 1967. There is also the matter of Israel's practices directed against Palestinian detainees in the occupied Palestinian territories and the fact that they are tortured during interrogation and in detention centres and prisons although the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 protects them from such measures.

Israel has ignored, as it continues to ignore, the appeals made and resolutions adopted by the international community, and it has done so by its persistence in and devotion to the maintenance of such practices of intimidation and repression. This confirms the existence of an ongoing, well established and systematic policy on the part of successive Israeli Governments to achieve objectives relating to the liquidation of our people's cause and its forcible expulsion, banishment and exile from its homeland and to the seizure of land and sources of water for the purpose of establishing Jewish settlements in a manner which is incompatible with the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, which is in open defiance of the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights and which has no precedent in the history of the United Nations.

The Israeli military occupation of our Palestinian territory in itself, moreover, constitutes a grave violation of Palestinian human and political rights as attested in repeated resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights. It has led to the idling of productive forces, the negation of economic and social development initiatives for Palestinian society, the clearing of Palestinian lands of their owners by forced migration, mass expulsion and deportation and the introduction of Jewish immigrants and their settlement on the lands thus vacated. It has further led to the ruin of the economic domination of the Palestinian economy and the progressive annexation and

Judaization of the occupied territories, as has happened to the City of Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. This is a grave violation of article 49 of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and an act of open rebellion against the provisions of numerous Security Council resolutions and of the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. Furthermore, Israel has not ceased its policy of oppression and ruthless action against our complete isolation from the outside world and the prevention of the delivery of food and medical supplies with the intention of destroying them through death by starvation. In so doing, it is committing the most heinous crimes against humanity and all that it represents in terms of divinely inspired missions and high and exalted values and ideals. It has also imposed collective punishments by destroying villages and homes, closing schools and universities, killing, expelling and arresting schoolchildren, students and teachers, imposing exorbitant taxes and fines, destroying plantations and agricultural produce by spraying with chemicals and toxic materials and uprooting fruit trees, particularly those olive trees on which God has invoked blessing in His Holy Books.

The continuing deterioration of the situation, without the international community intervening to bring an end to the plight of our Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, constitutes another grave tnreat to peace, stability and security in the region and the world, and it portends the disruption of the peace process set in train by the international community and crowned by the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference on 30 October 1992. This is, of course, what the Government of Israel is trying to achieve by persisting in its policy of intransigence, rejection and disdain for international legitimacy and the resolutions that embody it and for international law.

This tragic and deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory places on the international community, and especially on the States permanent members of the Security Council, the two co-sponsors of the Peace Conference and the United Nations and its various bodies, agencies and committees, a major responsibility to expedite, as a matter of urgency and necessity, the provision of international protection to the Palestinian people under occupation, to apply the standards of international legitimacy as has been done and is being donee in other parts of the world and to enable our people itself to exercise self-determination, without external interference and without the tanks and destruction of the Israeli occupation and its troops and settlers, in a free, democratic and honourable atmosphere like the other free peoples of the world.

I take this opportunity to convey to you once again our high appreciation for the important and constructive role played by this distinguished Committee, by the Division for Palestinian Rights at the United Nations and by our friends in the non-

governmental organizations of North American in expounding the justice of our people's struggle and its righteous cause so as to mobilize greater support and enable it to achieve freedom and independence, establish its national sovereignty and live in security, peace and stability in its own State.

At the important and delicate juncture at which our Palestinian cause finds itself, the reaffirmation of the support and backing of the non-governmental organizations of the world is important and essential for the Palestinian people. That people is in need of greater support and solidarity form all friends and all forces that cherish freedom, justice and peace in the world in order to strengthen its position in the political and diplomatic battle which it has been continuing to wage under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole legitimate representative, since the launching of the peace process at Madrid. Our people has participated in both bilateral and multilateral aspects of the negotiations stemming from that process with complete responsibility, earnestness, flexibility and effectiveness despite the unfair and unjust conditions imposed on its participation. Our Palestinian negotiating delegation has demonstrated to the entire world the desire by our people to achieve a just peace based on the principle of land for peace and on the resolutions of international legitimacy and the covenants of the United Nations. The magnificent Palestinian performance at these negotiations has won the respect and support of the States and peoples of the world.

In conclusion, I wish you success in your work so as to advance the causes of truth, justice, peace, and human rights everywhere on our planet.

Annex IV

1992-1993 NORTH AMERICAN COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NGOs ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

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Annex V

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

Participant NGOS

AMERICAN ARAB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE (ADC)
AMERICAN ARAB RELATIONS COMMITTEE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF JURISTS (AAJ)
AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL TRUST
AMERICAN FRIENDS OF PALESTINE
AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE
AMERICAN-ISRAELI CIVIL LIBERTIES COALITION
AMERICAN JEWISH ALTERNATIVES TO ZIONISM
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL AID
AMERICANS FOR MIDDLE EAST UNDERSTANDING
ARAB WOMEN'S COUNCIL
ASSOCIATION OF ARAB AMERICAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES
CANADIAN-ARAB FEDERATION
CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
CATHOLIC NEAR EAST WELFARE ASSOCIATION
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES
CENTRE D'ETUDES ARABES POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT
CHURCH OF HUMANISM
COUNCIL OF MASAJID (MOSQUES) OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERATION OF AMERICAN ARAB ORGANIZATIONS
FRIENDS OF JERUSALEM/NATUREI KARTA
FRIENDS WORLD COMMITTEE OF CONSULTATION
GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES - THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
GENERAL UNION OF PALESTINE STUDENTS
INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES
INTERNATIONAL JEWISH PEACE UNION
INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR UNITY AMONG RACES AND PEOPLES
JEWISH COMMITTEE FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE
JEWISH PEACE FELLOWHSIP
LABOR COMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
LOUISVILLE COMMITTEE FOR ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN STATES
MERCY CORPS INTERNATIONAL
MIDDLE EAST JUSTICE NETWORK
MIDDLE EAST OUTREACH COUNCIL
MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ARAB AMERICANS
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD
NEAR EAST CULTURAL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION OF CANADA

PAKISTAN DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE
PALESTINE AID SOCIETY
PALESTINE DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
PALESTINE DEMOCRATIC YOUTH ORGANIZATION
PALESTINE HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION CENTER INTERNATIONAL
PALESTINE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE
PALESTINIAN MOTHER AND CHILD'S CARE SOCIETY
PARTNERS FOR PEACE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA) - United Nations Office
WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
PRINCETON MIDDLE EAST SOCIETY
SOCIETY OF PALESTINIAN ENGINEERS AND SCIENTISTS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA
UNION OF PALESTINIAN AMERICAN WOMEN
UNION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA
UNITED HOLY LAND FUND
UNITED MUSLIMS OF AMERICA
UNITES STATES-OMEN
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM
WORLD MUSLIM CONGRESS
WORLD ORGANIZATION OF JEWS FROM ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

Observer NGOS

ASSOCIATION OF ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
CANADIAN-ARAB PALESTINIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
CANADIAN AUTOWORKERS - SOCIAL JUSTICE FUND
CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
DAYEMI COMPLEX BANGLADESH
FORD FOUNDATION
GAZA CENTER FOR RIGHTS AND LAW
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WORLD PEACE, DISARMAMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS
JEWISH COMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
LIES OF OUR TIMES
MADRE/WPN
MY BROTHER'S KEEPER - CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
QUAKER MIDDLE EAST ASSOCIATION
QUEBEC-PALESTINE ASSOCIATION
ROOTS - THE PALESTINE YOUTH ORGANIZATION
SETTLEMENT WATCH
UNITED STATES-PALESTINE MEDICAL REHABILITATION COMMITTEE
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION
WORLD SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

NGO coordinating committees

North American Coordinating Committee on the Question of Palestine

Palestine Committee for Non-governmental Organizations

International Coordinating Committee on the Question of Palestine

Panelists

Dr. Haidar ABDEL SHAFI, head of the Palestinian negotiating delegation to the peace talks. Chairman of the Palestine Red Crescent in Gaza

Richard CURTISS, Retired United States Foreign Service Officer, editor of the Washington Report on the Middle East

Dr. Ruchama MARTON, physician and psychologist, Chairperson of the Association of Israeli and Palestinian Physicians For Human Rights

Michal SCHWARTZ, writer and editor, Challenge magazine

Raji SOURANI, Director of the Gaza Center for Rights and Law

Elia ZUREIK, Professor of Sociology, Queens College, Kingston, Ontario

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Nassib El-Huseini
Majorie Fine
James A. Graff
Rabab Hadi
Sam Husseini
Najat Arafat Khelil
Tamara Kohns
Elizabeth Landis
Stephen Langfur
Lesly Lempert
Dr. Ruchama Marton
Aubrey McCutcheon
Colleen McGuire
Robin Morgan
Nancy Murray
John Quigley
Peter Rothberg
Michal Schwarz
Allen Siegel
Vivian Stromberg

Members and Observers of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Malta	H.E. Mr. Victor Camilleri Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York
Palestine	Dr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, New York
Senegal	H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, New York

Governments

Bangladesh
Bulgaria
Cyprus
Ecuador
Egypt
Ghana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Malaysia
Mauritius
Pakistan
Philippines
Turkey

Non-member States maintaining Permanent Observer Missions at Headquarters

Holy See

United Nations specialized agencies and bodies

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (**ESCWA**)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (**FAO**)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**)

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (**UNCHS**)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (**UNIDO**)

Intergovernmental organizations

Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee
Organization of the Islamic Conference

Other organizations having received a standing invitation to participate in the session and the work of the General Assembly as observers and maintaining permanent offices at Headquarters

Palestine

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